

The Palestinian Delegation formed by H.E. Minister Dr. Ramzi Khouri, President of the Higher Presidential Committee of Churches Affairs and Personal Envoy of H.E. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, H.E. Ambassador Ammar Hijazi, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Affairs, H.E. Issa Kassissieh, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Holy See and Father Ibrahim Faltas of the Custody of the Holy Land, ended its visit to the Vatican last 20th September.

The Delegation was received in private audience by His Holiness Pope Francis and also met H.E. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, H.E. Monsignor Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, and H.E. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation of the Oriental Churches.

During the talks H.E. Dr. Khouri explained the enormous difficulties and challenges the Palestinian people are forced to face because of the Israeli politics of occupation, pointing out the difficulties of the presence of Christians in the Holy City of Jerusalem, especially for the violations of the Church properties near the Jaffa Gate, which is the main entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other ecclesiastical institutions, and mentioning the confiscation of Cremisan land and Al'Makhrour in Beitjala.

In addition, the cooperation between the Vatican State and the State of Palestine, within the framework of the Comprehensive Agreement signed in 2015, was also discussed.

At the end of the meeting Pope Francis sent his prayers to the Palestinian people and to President Mahmoud Abbas, stressing the need to preserve the Status Quo of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the importance to make efforts at international level for its protection.